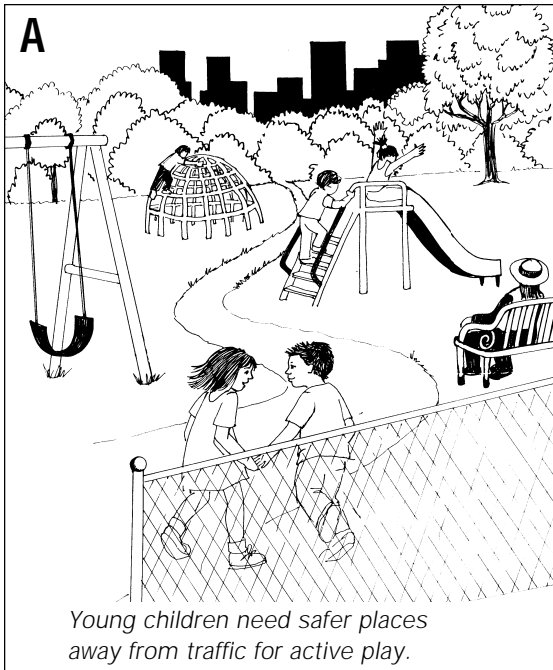


## Tip #14

# beyond the front yard: creating safer streets and play places for children



Crawling... walking... bike riding... in-line and roller skating. As babies grow into school kids, they move farther and faster. They love to be on the move -- to the neighbor's house, the school yard, the park, or the store! These activities are great for your children, if your neighborhood has safe playgrounds, sidewalks, and streets.

**Young children** need safe places for active play (A), yet many communities today are not kid-friendly.

**Children** over ten years old need safe ways to get themselves to school, sports events, and stores. When they walk or cycle, you-the parent-help your children learn responsibility and independence.

There are things YOU can do to make these outings safer! Slower traffic, nearby parks, and better sidewalks help everyone in the neighborhood. Older people and those with limited mobility will also appreciate these improvements.

## How pedestrian-friendly are your neighborhood streets?

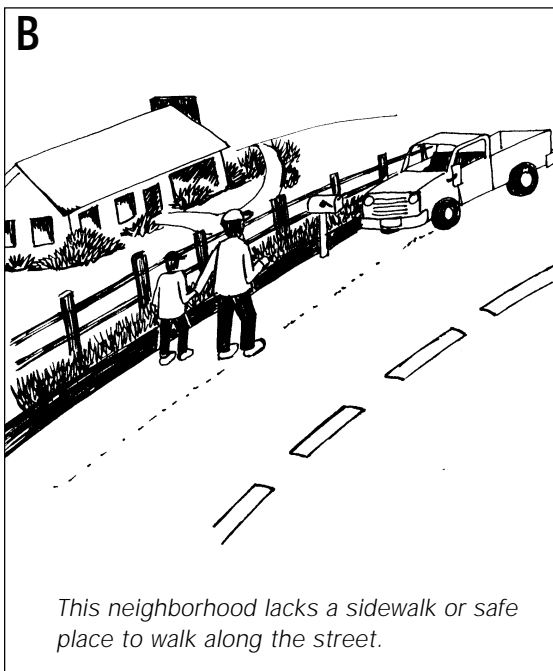
Take a walk in your neighborhood with your child. Look at the conditions along the way. You may want to score your area using the "Walkability Checklist." (See the back page for more information on how to get it.)

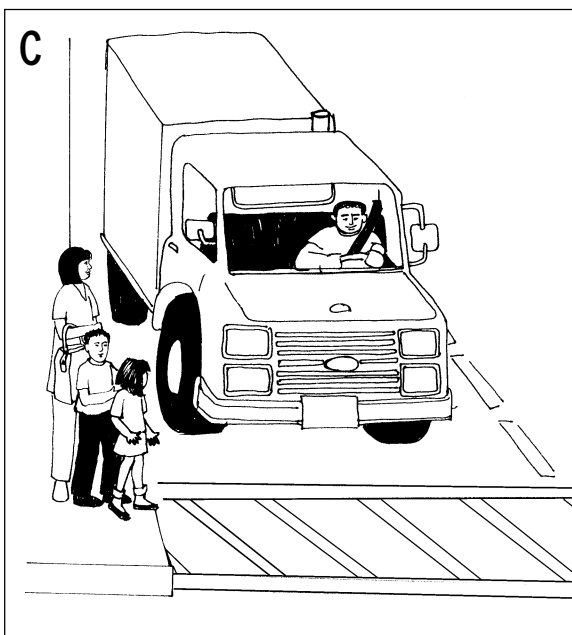
**As you walk, ask yourself these questions:**

- Are there places for people to walk (or for children to bicycle) off the street? (B)
- Are there places to cross streets easily and safely? Are there crossing guards near schools?
- Are the drivers courteous? Do they obey speed limits?
- Was your walk pleasant? Would you do it again?

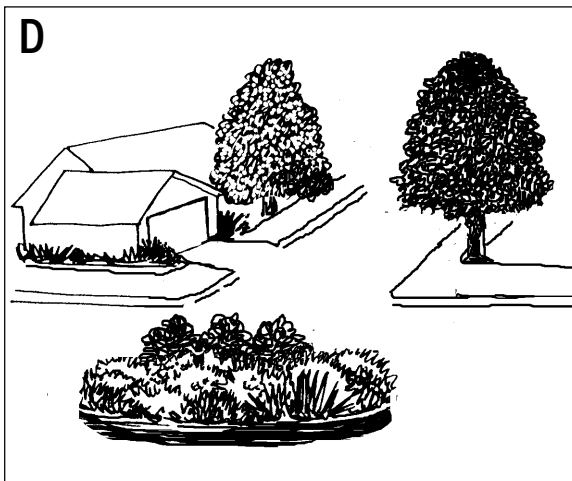
**Check below any problems that you find:**

- ☐ Traffic speeds are too high.
- ☐ No sidewalks or wide shoulders for walking (B).
- ☐ Roadside obstructions make walking difficult (parked cars, trash bins, overgrown bushes, ditches).
- ☐ No crosswalks or traffic signals where we want to cross busy streets.
- ☐ Drivers do not stop for pedestrians.
- ☐ No place for children to play.
- ☐ Playgrounds, library, and schools are too far away.





*Drive slowly and give pedestrians the right of way.*



*Traffic calming measures, like this island, can help slow traffic on neighborhood streets.*

# If you want to make your streets friendlier for kids

## Things that you can do yourself:

- As a driver, set an example by slowing down and giving pedestrians the right of way when crossing (C). Share the road with bicyclists.
- Obey speed limits, especially in neighborhoods where children play. Be extra careful in school zones.
- If buses or trains run in your area, use them with your child when practical.

## Things you can do with others:

Talk with your neighbors about the problems you see. They may want changes, too. Find others in your community who are concerned with child safety: traffic engineers, police traffic officers, school transportation directors, and parent-teacher associations. Write letters to your newspaper and speak up at public meetings for:

- playgrounds near homes so kids can play out of streets and parking areas;
- "traffic calming" improvements to slow down traffic on neighborhood streets (D), including traffic circles, speed bumps, and other engineering methods;
- construction of sidewalks or bike/pedestrian paths;
- a neighborhood crime watch, if needed. If playgrounds are being used for other activities, work with community groups to make them child-friendly.

**To get the "Walkability Checklist" (which is also available in spanish) or other child traffic safety information, visit the NHTSA website, [www.nhtsa.dot.gov](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov).**

**Or call the NHTSA Auto Safety Hotline: 1-888-DASH-2-DOT.**

## Preventing playground injuries

Yards, parks or playgrounds can be safe places for young children to play. Look for some of these features of safe play areas:

- spaces fenced in or well away from busy streets and traffic
- playground equipment in good repair
- soft surfaces below climbing structures and swings (wood chips, rubber, pea gravel, sand)
- grassy areas for games, paths for bicycling

